

Who Killed Kennedy?

The answers of 41 celebrities and authorities

Introduction. Remember those stories when Marilyn Monroe died, about her trying to telephone Bobby Kennedy? Or those rumors back in 1945 (noted in David J. Jacobson's *Affairs of Dame Rumor*, 1948) that FDR was "still alive, in a madhouse"? Remember when actor James Dean wasn't really killed in a motorcycle accident, but was laying low because he was hideously disfigured?

Maybe you also recall reading that Mrs. Warren G. Harding poisoned her husband because he was fooling around with Nanna P. Britton (Gaston B. Means, *The Strange Death of President Harding*, 1930). Huey Long wasn't shot by Dr. Carl Austin Weiss Jr., but by his own bodyguards (noted in Stan Optowski's *The Longs of Louisiana*, 1960). The Archduke Ferdinand, whose death triggered World War I, was assassinated by Freemasons (noted in Vladimir Dedijer's *The Road to Sarajevo*, 1966). John Wilkes Booth was never captured—the Secret Service killed the wrong man, then buried their mistake (*Dame Rumor*). Alternately, Booth's crime was instigated by Jesuits (Burke McCarty, *The Suppressed Truth About the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 1922). President McKinley's assassination was masterminded by Emma Goldman, the anarchist, and she was actually arrested. Woodrow Wilson's illness and death were the result of his being "a philanderer who had clan-

destine affairs" (*Dame Rumor*).

If you're a student of history, you also know that Mozart was done in by Salieri, that Anastasia wasn't slain in Siberia (despite the history books), and that Jesse James lived to a ripe old age (despite Robert Ford). Joan of Arc burned at the stake? According to one historian, she recanted and ran off with a carpenter. Napoleon didn't die in 1821, on St. Helena, but in 1834, in England (American historian P.P. Ebeyer, in *Revelations Concerning Napoleon's Escape from St. Helena*, 1947, says a phoney corpse was used).

The fact is that the untimely or unexpected death of almost every celebrated person sets the rumormongers mongering. Perhaps the sudden ending of a soaring career is so absurd that people must tamper with reality, or at least invent a more appropriate, magnificent death. Perhaps people need another shock to offset the first shock, according to the law that every emotional action has a reaction. And perhaps when the person who died was young and gifted, people simply cannot master their grief, and the event becomes a haunting obsession; and like all obsessions people mull it over and over again, in all sorts of new ways, hoping it will go away.

The public's obsession with the death of President Kennedy will never go away. No other event in the lives of most people today was so tragic and traumatic. Three years later, while

memorabilia still flourish and rumors are rife, jokes about the assassination are almost non-existent.* We still have not mastered our grief. Anger remains, too: Blame Jack Ruby for taking away our scapegoat. And we are also afraid, for as Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman note in *The Psychology of Rumor* (1947), "...anxiety is the power behind the macabre and threatening tales we so often hear...". Our fear may be that, unless Kennedy's assassination was the result of a conspiracy, cleverly and thoroughly planned, other emotional earthquakes could hit just as easily.

Hence the rumors. We are trying to conquer our obsession; we are trying to assure ourselves that such an event is unlikely to recur (even if co-conspirators are lurking about, we are better prepared for them); and we are looking for someone to hate. Among these rumors:

① the instigators were unidentified "bribe takers, punks, pimps, homosexuals, perverts, and cheap gamblers"—so says Texas newspaper publisher Penn Jones Jr. in *Forgive My Grief* (1966). Mr. Jones also predicts "more killings are going to be necessary in order to keep this crime quiet";

② the President's assassination, along with the murder of Patrice Lumumba and the death of Dag Hammarskjöld, was the work of those forces behind the U.S.—Belgian rescue operation in the Congo—"imperialistic forces of reaction, obscurantism, and racism" (Ousman Ba, Foreign Minister of Mali);

③ Kennedy had an incurable disease and arranged his own assassination (Mrs. Marguerite Oswald);

④ Oswald was innocent and was framed by at least two other assassins, one of them possibly being Patrolman J.D. Tippit (Richard H. Popkin, *The Second Oswald*, 1966);

⑤ Oswald was part of a Communist conspiracy whose existence has been hushed up "by the arch-Communist himself, Chief Justice Earl Warren" (noted in the *New York Times Magazine*, 9/11/66);

⑥ Oswald was being used by the FBI to

discredit the Right Wing, "the F.B.I. being, too, a Communist organization" (*ibid.*);

⑦ Communists killed Kennedy because the President was gradually giving up his Communist sympathies (Revalo P. Oliver, former John Bircher, in *American Opinion*);

⑧ a group of Catholics did it because Kennedy was blocking their attempts to take over the country (anti-Catholic literature);

⑨ "The conspiracy involved, I believe, some officials of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. as well as some Army figures such as General Walker, and reactionary oil millionaires such as H.L. Hunt" (Joachim Joesten, *Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?* 1964);

⑩ Oswald was innocent, and his wife—"this young Russian woman"—is very suspicious indeed (Lawrence R. Brown, *Triumph*, 9/66);

⑪ Lyndon B. Johnson instigated it. Jack Ruby has suggested as much, and the rumor seems to be sweeping the country. New York *Post* columnist Pete Hamill, who is skeptical, has outlined the reasons why Johnson is suspect: he has a lust for power; Kennedy didn't treat him with proper respect; he was overeager to accept the Vice-Presidency; he wanted to be President, but saw only many more Kennedy years coming; the murder took place in his home state; and he had insisted that Kennedy visit Dallas.

Easily the silliest and most far-fetched theory of all, judging by conversations at parties, is that Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed President Kennedy, but notwithstanding *Time Magazine* and William F. Buckley Jr. to the affirmative, it's probably true. It was his rifle and his palm print; he was seen in the building whence the shots came; his pistol killed Patrolman Tippit. He also had a motive—a pathological need for the self-esteem he never got from people, from his job, or from inner resources. Lee Harvey Oswald was a common American type: the creep. He appears in American literature as Wilmer Cook in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* and in American films as Hunt Bromley in *The Gunfighter*. At 16, Oswald threatened to kill President Eisenhower. He had taken a pot-shot at General Walker, and his wife once had to stop him from taking potshots at Johnson, or

*Only two have been widely reported. (1) "What happened when the elephant walked into the Dallas police station?" "Nothing. Nobody saw it." (2) Oswald was "an Anarchist who finally decided to make an Existentialist commitment."

Nixon. His widow and his half-brother concede he was the guilty man, and even his mother has said it was possible that Oswald assassinated the President, because as she said, "I am not the type mother to think that he is perfect. . . ."

Sure, a cop misidentified the rifle. But that cop was the all-American know-it-all. Sure, a lot of witnesses have since died violent deaths, but in Dallas, murder capital of the world, violent deaths are natural deaths. And yes, many people claim to have seen Oswald when they could not have seen him. But John Wilkes Booth was spotted 20 times after he was dead.

There *are* mysteries. Why was bullet 399 intact? How could a rifle be fired that quickly? For that matter, "How come the public didn't see him [FDR] dead, and why the constant guard over his grave?" (letter, *New York Daily News*, 3/24/46) "Why did [Harding] have that ptomaine poisoning? He didn't eat anything that all the rest of the party were not eating." (*Strange Death of President Harding*) "How, within six minutes of the shooting, 18 minutes before anybody in Baton Rouge knew who the assassin was, did a Washington newspaperman know his full name: Dr. Carl Austin Weiss, Jr? Why have neither friends nor foes of Huey Long seemed anxious to clear up the mystery once and for all?" ("Mystery in the Death of Huey Long," *Reader's Digest* 9/39) "Why wasn't the President effectively guarded on the night of April 14, 1865? . . . Why did Booth want to see Vice-President Johnson on that Good Friday? Why was the Vice-President so drunk the next day?" (Emmett McLoughlin, *An Inquiry into the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*, 1963)

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In a Louis Harris poll taken after the Warren Report was published, 54% of the respondents thought there "still may be some unanswered questions." Some 69% thought Oswald was the assassin, but only 34% thought he acted alone—46% believed there was a conspiracy and 20% were not sure. (Don't feel sorry for the Warren Commission. Holt, Rinehart and Winston editors report that Chief Justice Warren personally tried to prevent their publishing Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment*.)

Fact's own poll of authorities and celebrities, published below, confirms the existence of widespread doubt about who killed President Kennedy. More important, *Fact's* poll lends support to the various proposals that the assassination be investigated once again. Richard N. Goodwin, former Presidential assistant, has suggested that a Congressional committee be set up, as has Congressman Theodore Kupferman (R., N.Y.). Novelist Norman Mailer has urged that a committee made up of men like Dwight Macdonald and Edmund Wilson be empowered to do the job. (Queried by *Fact*, Mr. Wilson declined to serve; Mr. Macdonald was willing.)

Whatever its make-up, such a committee could help scotch the assassination rumors. Psychologists have reported that the intensity of rumors (*R*) varies according to the importance of the topic (*i*) and the ambiguity of the evidence (*a*)— $R=i \times a$. In this equation, *i* cannot be reduced, but *a* can. And this is precisely what a new committee, devoted to unraveling the remaining mysteries, could accomplish.

—The Editors

Paul Goodman
sociologist

I think that Mark Lane's book is definitely reasonable, and that the Warren Commission's report was poor. I think it's even likely that there was manufactured evidence—the FBI and the CIA have manufactured evidence before.

Certainly the whole case seems full of fabrication. It seems unlikely that Oswald was the lone assassin of Kennedy, or that he was the assassin at all. And I think it's extremely stupid of the Warren Commission to try to hush up the thing.

Let's put it this way: I don't give a rap *who* killed Jack Kennedy, you know, one way or the other. You can quote me on that. I really don't care. I care *immensely* if the police and the government are involved in a fabrication, because that results in a complete loss of public trust. It becomes clear that, if in important matters like this we can't trust evidence that comes from the police, and such important police as the FBI, then there's no reason to have *any* public trust in

any part of the government.

Cleveland Amory
writer

Where there's smoke, there's bound to be fire. There have now been five—no less than five—books criticizing the Warren Commission. If they are true, or even parts of them are true (and I believe they are), then you can add to the incredible failure of the Secret Service to protect the President to begin with, and add to the utterly incomprehensible shortcomings of the Dallas police in permitting Oswald to be shot by Ruby, a third and final outrage—that of the Warren Commission. If not actually inept, it was certainly hardly ept.

Edward M. Keating
publisher, writer, lawyer

Reading all the books and articles that have come out has raised very serious doubts in my mind as to the conclusions of the Warren Report. Take such things as the Zapruder film with its mysteriously deleted frame, the questions about whether the bullet came from the front or back, the mystery of the autopsy, the time-sequence of the shots, the refusal to present the X-rays of the President, the hint at a prior acquaintance between Ruby, Tippit, and Oswald—collect all of these things, and add the method used by the Warren Commission (the inadequate cross-examination, the absence of adversary proceedings), and it all leaves you feeling very, very uneasy.

I think that the best evidence that the Warren Commission was a hush-up deal was when they ignored the possibility that Oswald was an informant, or an agent, of the FBI. You've got to come away feeling something's rotten there.

But what really concerns me is Warren's statement that some of his material would not be available in our lifetimes, and would be locked up in the archives for 75 years. Well, in terms of our national security, what the hell are they talking about?

Arthur Miller
playwright

The evidence of the X-rays, which have

been withheld, seems to throw doubt upon the description of the wounds as officially adopted by the Commission Report.

There's enough now to indicate that the bullets came from more than one direction.

John Updike
writer

I think there are some puzzling points in the official version, but I find the alternate reports less credible than the official one. Unless some additional information is brought out, I am inclined to think that Oswald was the lone assassin.

Harry Golden
writer & editor

I have an advantage. I have a big advantage. I was pretty close, and I still am pretty close, to Bobby Kennedy. I've worked for him, and so forth. You know, next to the widow he was the most devastated man in the world. Now, Senator Kennedy told me 2 months after the assassination, quote, "The family is satisfied there was this one fellow." He couldn't even mention Oswald's name!

Well, listen: that's only the Attorney-General of the United States! And the brother! Who is *he* protecting? He'd go to the moon to get the guy.

You know, 50 years after the assassination of President Lincoln they were still charging a dime to see the mummified body of John Wilkes Booth. Now it's more expensive—these books about the assassination cost about five bucks each. But it's all a fake. And there'll be dozens of more books. People are titillated by it.

One fellow, Mark Lane, wrote a whole book wondering about how Jack Ruby had access to police headquarters. What Mark Lane doesn't know is that there's a Jack Ruby in every town in America. There's two or three of them *here*, in Charlotte. Guys with pockets full of courtesy cards, you know. Sheriff's courtesy cards. They follow the fire engines, and whenever there's an arrest, they're there.

Who is the Warren Commission supposed to be protecting? Another gunman? On what basis? Protecting the Far Right? The Far Right

has signs all over America, IMPEACH EARL WARREN. Wouldn't that have been a nice time for Warren to smash 'em? Those fellows like Mark Lane are still showing the mummified body of John Wilkes Booth.

Melvin Belli
former lawyer for Jack Ruby

The real villain in this piece is that latter-day King Farouk, J. Edgar Hoover. Anything he gets his hands on becomes secret and covert. He has the ideology of a Louis XIV. Hoover had a lot of information he didn't make available, so blame the FBI. He brought suspicion on the Warren Commission to cover up the FBI's own shortcomings in the case. There's a lot of jealousy between him and the local law-enforcement officers. He has a lot on the Kennedy family and everybody else in this country (except me). The Kennedy family is afraid to move.

The Warren Report *is*, ultimately, proof. It was accurate, though perhaps the execution and the documentation left a lot to be desired. There *was* a lone assassin. There *was* a fair trial for him and Ruby. Ruby did *not* know Oswald.

As for Mark Lane, he's trying to promote alfalfa cigarettes as a cure-all for this country. I'll take Warren any day in the week, even though he's in the opposite political party. At least Warren never sold any alfalfa cigarettes.

Al Capp
cartoonist

I think that people are always willing to listen to all sorts of attacks on the Establishment, to listen to outrageous gossip. Good God, there's always been a market for that. And nowadays the surest way to make a buck is to attack the Warren Report.

We all adore detective stories and we all adore debunking and exposés, whether we believe them or not. Gee whiz, I remember there was a great debunker years ago who proceeded to debunk the myth of George Washington and the cherry tree—Woodward was his name. For years he wrote the most convincing cases against everything we believed in, and we were thrilled by it, we bought it and bought it. Now his books are

no longer read, and everybody believes it about George Washington and the cherry tree.

No, I don't think the assassination had anything to do with national violence. It's just that a nut has a gun and uses it. Good God, we have them in the riots in St. Louis and Watts and Cleveland, nuts who get up in concealed places and shoot. I don't think the assassination had the faintest thing to do with violence in our society. I think the nut with the gun has been part of *every* culture.

Orson Bean
actor

I've always felt, right from the first few days, that it was this poor wretch Oswald. He was a wretch in every way—emotionally, mentally, and physically he was a *wretch*. So it's hard to believe he'd be in the pay of any scheming gang.

More often than not, when things are sloppy and messy in life, people want to put everything into order, tied up in a package. People are uncomfortable living with an untidy explanation, and they're anxious to have a slam-bang, pat one. So they're grasping at straws. But the fact is that a poor sick nut shot President Kennedy for no other reason than that he happened to be a poor sick nut.

Mark Lane's book and the others do raise questions in my mind, but I just feel it was a ridiculous series of coincidences that Oswald happened to be the way he was in the first place. If a plot ever is uncovered, I'd say fine, but did you know that it's never even been conclusively proven that Booth shot Lincoln? And I wonder what Lane's going to do if he discovered it was a plot of *Left Wingers* that killed Kennedy.

Mark Lane
author, Rush to Judgment

No, I hadn't heard that Justice Warren wanted my book suppressed. I know he's a friend of the president of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, but I don't believe it's true. It *is* true that the assistant director of the FBI called one publisher and asked him not to publish my book. But, after all, my book says that the FBI carried on at best

have successfully inflamed the whole nation against the Birch Society, Buckley, the Klan, the American Nazi Party, and even the Right Wing Jew faker, Goldfink.

Now you Jews at *Fact* can print this *as is*, or leave it out. No more of your Hebrew hanky-panky.

See you in '72! Heil Hitler!

Andy Warhol
artist

It's too hard to accept Oswald as the only assassin. It's such a fantasy. After reading all these things, I just find it too hard to believe.

Kent Courtney
founder, Conservative Society of America

I often wonder why it is, when the Warren Commission mentioned Oswald's name, they forgot to mention that he was a member of an identified Communist-front organization, the so-called Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The press also refuses to mention it.

I have in front of me a big scrapbook containing all of the stories concerning the assassination, from the day before the assassination to the burial, from the Fort Worth and the Dallas newspapers. And I can tell you, just by rereading those as I do from time to time, that there were shots from at least *three* different places—one from the black bridge, one from the hill, and maybe one or two from where Oswald was.

So, just from reading of the press, I'd say there was a conspiracy that included Oswald and others, and I think that among these was Jack Ruby.

I think that one of the main reasons that Jack Kennedy was assassinated was that he had not been trying, during those years, to get the Congress to pass the foreign-aid-to-Communist-countries bills. I think Jack Kennedy was definitely putting the brakes on, and not pushing the Congress on legislation that favored Communists.

Carl Marzani
publisher

The great, classic approach to crime detection goes back to Roman times—the phrase, *cui*

bono? which means, To whose benefit is it? Now, as Marquis Childs said in his syndicated column Oct. 19, 1963 (43 days before the assassination), President Kennedy was definitely considering removing the depletion allowance. The depletion allowance is one of the greatest boons to the oil business—the coal companies don't get it, the copper companies don't get it, the mineral companies don't get it, timber people don't get it, only the oil companies. It's a complete steal from the tax-payers' funds. One of the richest men in the world, oilman H.L. Hunt, according to President Kennedy as reported by Childs, pays very little taxes, for example. On top of that, Kennedy said, the 27% allowance which Texas oil men get is used by them to finance Right Wing activities, all tax exempt. Obviously, the assassination was to the benefit of such people, because Johnson has not touched the depletion allowance, and had no intention of doing so.

I feel quite positively that there was more than one person involved. If, in fact, Oswald was not alone, then immediately the question of a conspiracy arises, because it would be incredible that two fanatics at the same time should both decide to kill the President. That being the case, you then have to find somebody who planned the thing, and very definitely the finger of suspicion points at those who benefited from it.

Now, the assassination would obviously not benefit the Left Wing, for Kennedy was taking steps to abate the Cold War, he'd made a promise to Castro that Cuba would not be invaded. Further, with Kennedy killed, the Left got as a President a man known to be more conservative, so it's kind of silly to knock off a young man who was on the road to softening animosities internationally, and to get a guy who—we know what we got now.

But from the Right Wing viewpoint, it makes a great deal of difference. Skipping the depletion allowance, there is the fact that the Right felt that Kennedy was pro-Communist, as shown by the newspaper attack on Kennedy in Dallas. It's all on the record that these people thought of Kennedy as a lefty, as soft on Communism, and so on.

Now, mark my words: A break is going to

come in this case, like in the Dreyfus case. It took 12 years in France for the Dreyfus case to break open. It may not take that long in this one, because the pot is already boiling.

Louis Untermeyer
poet & anthologist

All I can say is that there seem to be gaps and deficiencies in the Warren Report, which I would love to see cleared up. It leaves one with a kind of dubiousness. Yes, I am in favor of a new commission to investigate the case, if it could be supported by public subsistence.

J.I. Rodale
publisher, editor, writer

My own opinion, purely as a hunch, would be that Oswald was working alone.

The only opinion I have of the assassin is that most of these people are very, very, *very* malnourished. They usually are suffering from low blood sugar—overconsumption of sugar, strangely, causes low blood sugar, which is a state close to insanity. In fact, they found Coca-Cola bottles up in the place Kennedy was shot from. Oswald was not responsible for this action: His brain was confused because he was a sugar drunkard.

So what is called for now is a full-scale investigation of sugar consumption and crime. I think a commission should be set up to study the diets of Oswald and other criminals. In 1900 the average person consumed 10 pounds of sugar a year. Now it's 100 pounds. Crime has been going up. This is the thing that's been bothering me.

John Howard Griffin
writer (Black Like Me)

What disturbed me very much was that the case appeared to have been closed up so rapidly by the Warren Commission. I never saw anything go so fast. It seemed that they were afraid of a complete investigation.

Yes, I certainly do think that our society was responsible for the assassination. There is an atmosphere of violence in our country today, particularly in the South. In my own work, I've

come across such a willingness to do away with a President that it's quite terrifying.

I also think that the possibility of another Presidential assassination is greater today than it was 5 years ago, or 3 years ago when it happened, because it seems to me that the climate of violence, in which people believe in force to accomplish their ends, has almost reached a peak in our country today.

Artie Shaw
musician

The case will never be closed, though legally it's closed. And as for getting together a new committee to review everything, as Norman Mailer suggests, I feel that when something's over, walk away from it. The principals are dead, so I don't know what's to be gained. Spend money on the living.

Norman F. Dacey
author, How To Avoid Probate

The American people would *like* to believe that the assassination wasn't just the insane act of a single individual. Because if there were a conspiracy, perhaps Americans would not be blaming themselves for allowing a system to grow in which such an act could be carried out.

Westbrook Pegler
political writer

I never had any confidence in Justice Warren. I don't know how *anyone* can justify an inquiry led by a man who had no qualifications. He should have been knocked on his fanny and taken to a Springfield, Missouri, asylum, like General Walker. Warren's a flannel-mouth and unfit to be a judge.

Henry Wade
district attorney, Dallas, Texas

I know there are a few people who've written crazy articles, but so far as I know most people accept the Warren Report. The others are by nature renegades, they'd find something wrong with anything, you know. This idea of somebody else shooting from the railroad tracks is, of course, baloney.

I don't think there's any question that Lee Harvey Oswald was the only one that did the shooting, but whether he was motivated from the Left or the Right, or had people advising him, or someone assisting him, no one knows.

Gordon Allport, Ph.D.
professor of psychology, Harvard University

We have to get an adequate reason for a disaster, and one little psychopath on the sixth floor doesn't look very adequate. Broadly speaking, systematic conspiracy theories would explain major disasters better. Your cause has to equal your effect, and the effect of the assassination was very great, and therefore people want an adequate cause.

David Rothstein, M.D.
psychiatrist

Maybe some of the people who prefer to believe that there was a conspiracy feel that there must be a reason for everything—the idea that chance was involved, or mental illness, or that there was no purposeful reason for the assassination might be upsetting to these people.

As for the Warren Commission, I was one of three psychiatrists who met with them on July 9, 1964, at the V.F.W. building in Washington. I feel they should have at least put into their report the fact that they had *had* this discussion with us, and what some of the ideas were, even if they didn't commit themselves to saying that they were endorsing these ideas.

Renatus Hartogs, M.D., Ph.D.
psychiatrist

The Warren Report is, in my definite opinion, a serious and sincere, clumsy and ponderous effort to find the answer to the most hideous crime in recent American history. It mobilized extreme discomfort and anxiety among all those people who tremble in their boots when they have to face the undeniable fact that one single individual is able to plan and execute all by himself such a dastardly and monstrous deed of destruction.

While the Warren Report points the accusing finger clearly at that single man Oswald,

who in his megalomaniac power-hunger had to commit the world-shaking crime of his generation, agitated and frightened minds all over the world quickly had to write articles and books in an attempt to spread thin the responsibility for such a murderous deed by means of inventing and suspecting "conspirators." It would indeed be so much more soothing and anxiety-relieving if one could assume, or even prove, that such a murder was the result of a political conspiracy of many—rather than the frenzied product of a single, diseased mind.

My own early contact with the young Oswald left no doubt that I was psychiatrically dealing with an extremely violence-prone and exceedingly dangerous individual, filled with cold rage against the world around him. He was an isolate, always alone with his violent thoughts and not wanting to share his angry resentment and vindictive intentions with anybody. He was essentially a violent loner for whom a contact or alliance with conspirators was totally unthinkable and unacceptable.

Since I examined Oswald, I have encountered and diagnostically evaluated numerous such violence-prone individuals who—many years after the examination—actually committed very serious assaultive or homicidal crimes, but never got the same publicity as Oswald did. These individuals with homicidal potential practically always act alone. They have—like the Texas tower-murderer or the Chicago nurses-killer—no conspirators, and do not need or want them. They plan their crimes carefully and cautiously and execute them with the cold precision, decisiveness, and the striking power we usually would not believe to find in a single individual. Yet they are and act alone in their closed world of hate and violence. They cannot tolerate any conspirators, because sharing the criminal responsibility and status would deprive them of the desired emotional impact, cathartic effect, and notoriety of their violent acting-out.

Even at the risk of frightening some soft-brained and tender-hearted rumormongers, we must state that Kennedy's death was "unfortunately" not a political assassination designed by a congenial group of conspirators, but a brutal

murder with political impact, conceived, planned, and perpetrated by the morbid inner world-forces of a single, insanely destructive power-operator.

Albert Ellis, Ph.D.
psychologist

There is no certainty in the world. There's probably at least a 90 or 95% chance that the basic conclusions of the Warren Report are true. But there never will be absolute certainty, and many people demand absolute certainty.

I also feel that a large minority of people are paranoid, and paranoid people always think of things being a conspiracy. The Right Wing paranoiac suspects a conspiracy, as does the Left Wing paranoiac. These people always feel a little more comfortable with some kind of conspiracy because they feel, basically, that the world is against *them*, that there's a conspiracy against *them*--their own problems couldn't be their own doing, so it must be a plot. And they project this plot onto the socio-political scene.

The chances are 90 or 95 out of a hundred that Oswald did it alone, but there's always other possibilities, which will remain unprovable for all time. But I myself am willing to live in a world of probability and chance, where we pick the greatest possibility and don't expect certainty.

Warner Brown
psychoanalyst

First: Americans, because of their puritanical upbringing, are very apt to believe in wild rumors. Most Americans, as impressionable children, were exposed to a fantastic mystery: the mystery of sex. As the years went by, thanks to their parents' embarrassment, the mystery was not resolved. It deepened. Finally came the solution, strange and magical: sexual intercourse and childbirth. Thenceforward, whenever these people encounter any further mysteries, they are apt to look for fantastic and magical solutions--simply because the first mystery they ever encountered had that kind of solution.

My second point: All men, as children, at times wished that they had their mothers all to themselves, and they wish their fathers were out of the way--the Oedipus Complex. Naturally,

these murderous impulses toward authority-figures carry over into adult life. And so you will find that whenever a leader of a country dies, whenever a father-figure dies, there is widespread guilt. People, in their unconscious minds, feel that they themselves are guilty. It's for this same reason that innocent people confess to crimes they did not commit: At one time or another, they *wanted* to commit that crime.

Now, the public's guilt over President Kennedy's assassination is manifested in the pathological mourning that followed, in the lavish gifts bestowed upon Officer Tippit's widow and Marina Oswald, the letters sent to Jacqueline Kennedy, and the adulation given to Bobby Kennedy. By giving Bobby Kennedy their votes and their cheers, people are proving that no, they didn't kill his brother. And perhaps they are proving that the President isn't dead after all--in the unconscious mind, it's easy to confuse the two brothers.

But the guilt is still there. And therefore many people want to prove, once again, that they didn't kill the President, and they are looking for other assassins.

My last point is that of all people, the Jews are the most vulnerable to the death of a leader. They feel more guilty than anyone else. One reason is that all their lives they have been blamed for the death of another father--God, Jesus Christ. Many of my Jewish patients told me how anxious they were until they found out that the assassin, Oswald, was a Protestant. It was natural for a Jew, Jack Ruby, in order to expiate his own feelings of guilt, to kill Oswald. And it is natural that Jewish intellectuals would try to find other guilty people besides Oswald: one Oswald is not enough to relieve their guilt. Mark Lane, Harold Popkin, Feldman, Harold Weisberg, Edward Jay Epstein--they are all looking for additional assassins, and they get their articles published in Jewish magazines like *Commentary* (run by Norman Podhoretz) and the *New York Review of Books* (run by someone named Epstein).

This may seem hard to believe, but a survey was made during World War II about credence given to wild rumors, and it was found that Jews,

more than any other group, believed them. Of course, for historical and social reasons, the Jews have to pay more attention to frightening rumors than anyone else. But it is also true, I think, that Jews readily accept the guilt of any murder of a father-figure, and this explains why the inability to accept one lone assassin has come mainly from Jewish men and Jewish magazines.

Paul B. Sheatsley
*director, Survey Research Institute
National Opinion Research Center*

Jacob J. Feldman and I once conducted a survey on public reactions to the assassination, and a majority of the public expressed the belief that Oswald did not act alone, that other people were involved. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has attributed this conspiracy theory to the activities of extremist groups, which have been preaching about plots and conspiracies in American life for many years.

Daniel Bell has noted, "It takes a high degree of sophistication, Freud wrote, to believe in chance; primitive fears are allayed more easily by a devil theory of politics." Resort to a conspiratorial diagnosis would seem to be particularly appropriate in the case of the Kennedy assassination, because most people do not easily accept the concept of mental illness to explain behavior—especially if the person who is mentally ill displays self-control and appears to be rational. Moreover, the conclusion that mentally ill people—not responsible for their behavior—are at large among us, and are capriciously ending the life of even a President, is both bizarre and threatening.

Tom Paxton
folk singer

My own personal opinion is very bad copy, because I just don't know what to think about the whole thing. I've come to no conclusions and I doubt if I'll ever be able to. I *do* believe that we probably didn't get the whole story from anybody, including Mark Lane. And I'm always ready to listen to any talk about conspiracy, because it's certainly not beneath certain groups on either side. We definitely need another investiga-

tion.

Allen Ginsberg
poet

The 1966 published studies on the Warren Commission Report do confirm that, like most official documentation (whether of the death of President Kennedy or the reasoning behind the Vietnam war), language therein framed as a vehicle for perception and thought processes is not satisfactory human communication. Too much of the subjective data of the measuring instrument itself, that is, the Warren Commission or the Pentagon, is eliminated by terminological officialese. Norman Mailer's style of personal critique, for instance, carries more information than the inferior prose style of the Warren Commission Report.

Secondly, the "credibility gap" established by men in the government over the last decade has spread to cover almost all official statements, from FDA "fact sheets" on LSD (which are full of stereotype-language misinformation) to Rusk's analyses of the genesis of the Vietnam war (which differs so much from Walter Lippman's language or DeGaulle's). So who can believe anything said in "objective" jargon?

Close analyses published by Mark Lane and others have revealed crudities of procedure, discrepancies of information, and lacunae of association in Warren Commission texts. So that leaves all of us up in the air, in a bombing plane over Hanoi.

Mailer's proposal for a commission of literary persons whose goodness of temperament is more trustworthy than that of politicians makes simple common sense. The nation's in a mess. Dwight Macdonald's as trustworthy to straighten it out as LeRoi Jones or President Johnson.

Dwight Macdonald
journalist

Yes, I think there is a psychological explanation—more accurately a psycho-socio-political one—for why Americans have believed, before and after the Warren Report, that Oswald was either part of, or framed up by, a conspiracy that has not yet been uncovered, whether by

chance or bungling or design. They are the young and/or the alienated, and they begin with a skepticism about the American Establishment and a suspicion of its motives for which they have many and good reasons—though not as many nor as good as they think they have. These assumptions have led them to seize on every contradiction, every obscurity, major or minor, in this most complex and murky affair, in order to justify their initial prejudice, which made it easy for them to believe, long before the Warren Report was published, on the shaky basis of newspaper stories and Mark Lane's lecture tours—his manipulation of *The Facts* was even more one-sided, for the defense, than that of his fellow-lawyers on the Commission staff was for the prosecution—that “there must have been a conspiracy.” The same assumption made it difficult, almost impossible, for them to believe that one peculiar individual might have done it all by himself for his own peculiar, personal reasons. I think this belief, or prejudice, would have survived, in this ambiance, even if the Warren Report had been a good deal more convincing than it was.

I must admit, however, that while I still find no difficulty in believing that Oswald did it all by himself and for his own peculiar, personal reasons, and that if I have to say *yes* or *no* to Oswald's sole guilt, I'd still say *yes*, I am more than a little shaken in this conclusion by some recent critical analyses of the Warren Report. When I wrote a critique of the Report in *Esquire* (March, 1965), soon after it was published, I found it a brief for the prosecution rather than what it pretended to be, an objective investigation. It seemed to me biased in favor of the hypothesis that Oswald had done it, all by himself. But I was convinced by the “hard” evidence of ballistics, handwriting, ownership of guns, analysis of paper fibers, presence on the scene, etc. Now we have a number of recent books which cast doubts on many of the Warren Commission's conclusions, on the basis of a more extensive study of the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits than I had had time to make, since they were published only a few weeks before I finished my *Esquire* article.

More important, there is now a considerable body of what seems to me reasonable criticism of a crucial bit of “hard” evidence that I had accepted without thinking about it, had just assumed was Fact: the validity of the official autopsy on the President's body, which described the first wound as made by a bullet which entered his neck from the back and which could, therefore, also have completed its trajectory by wounding Governor Connally, who was sitting in front of him in the car. (If the same bullet didn't hit both men, there must have been a second assassin, since, for reasons everybody seems to accept, there couldn't have been time for the same rifle to have been fired, let alone aimed, twice.) This crucial point is made, with varying degrees of effectiveness, in recent books by Léo Sauvage, Harold Weisberg, Richard Popkin, and Mark Lane, but the one that really unsettled my previous assumptions was Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest*, which not only turned up a lot of completely new data on it—and on other aspects of the Report—but also convinced me by his cautious, fair-minded, succinctly rational presentation of his material that his aim was quite simply, without any personal or political ax-grinding, to get at the truth rather than to score off the Commission's Report.

Finally, you ask: “Would you serve on a commission to investigate the assassination?” This puts me in a rather awkward position. Although I have been publicly nominated for such a post by Norman Mailer (see *Book Week*, August 28th last), with Edmund Wilson replacing Earl Warren as chairman, I have not yet received a formal invitation from the White House. All I can say at the moment—our President's dislike of any premature “leaks” of his future appointments is well-known—is that my contacts in the Administration indicate that he, or He, is enthusiastic, image-wise, about Mailer's proposed Literary Commission To Revise The Warren Report. However, he (He) feels, with his subtle political sense, that the nomination should go “through channels,” in this case a committee composed of Messrs. Rusk, Hoover, and McNamara. When this matter of form is complied with, I shall probably, *entre nous*, accept the appoint-

ment. I don't see how I or Mr. Wilson or Mr. Mailer could do worse than Mr. Warren's Commission has.

Marya Mannes
author & critic

I think the American public, exposed to movies, theater, and television, *want* a plot, and not one assassin who did it alone, by himself. To believe that more than one man did it is somehow more of a release. Yet most American assassinations have been committed by a single person. You really couldn't call the Lincoln assassination a conspiracy. It was one deranged man, one obsessed man.

The tremendous public interest in all these books is quite natural. The assassination of this particular President could be the major event of our time. It was a terrible emotional experience everybody went through, and I think there's a masochistic desire to somehow live through it all over again, and read anything and everything—even the most cock-eyed theories, whether you believe them or not. So far, the assassination was certainly the greatest tragedy of all for the current generation. I know that the young identified with him as they did with no one else.

I myself accepted Oswald as the lone assassin. Frankly, I have not read all these books, but I read the whole Warren Report, and I must say I came away from the long exercise pretty well convinced that indeed it was Oswald. Now I know that discrepancies have been discovered, which may or may not be important, and which may or may not involve others. If there is any final truth, one must certainly be open to it.

The assassination, I believe, was also related to the terrific underlay of violence in the American people. It worries me very much. I think it's very close to the surface, and I think it can be triggered by all sorts of things. I'm afraid that I do subscribe to the belief that there is a certain sickness in our society, the sickness of violence, and it troubles me deeply because I think it extends to the public's acceptance of the Vietnamese war, too. The acceptance of war as a necessary condition, for whatever aims, is a very frightening thing.

Theodore Bikel
actor & singer

First of all, it's very hard to reconcile oneself to a national tragedy, to as shocking an event as the assassination of a President revered as only FDR was in this century. One is unwilling to accept tragedy—that's one reason many people don't accept the Warren Report. Another is that the explanation of the tragedy seems to be a facile one—too easy. It's all tied up with a neat blue ribbon.

I'm saying there's a possibility that it ain't so, and this possibility should have been mentioned more prominently than it has been. There are certain things that just don't fit the theory, and you can't just disregard the facts that don't fit your theory and press the ones that do. We're dealing with history here; we're also *not* dealing with children.

Obviously, it is in the interest of the Establishment—with a capital E—that its stability not be rocked by speculations, uncertainties, and psychological upset. They want everybody to be nice and comfortable, that even a tragedy like this have THE END written in clear, block letters so that we can now look to the future and stop fretting over the past.

Whether the matter should be laid to rest or not is another question. I happen to think it should not. One has to live with one's doubts and one's guilt—and you cannot tie up history with nice neat ribbons.

Dagmar Wilson
leader, Women's Strike for Peace

I myself don't accept the case as closed, although I've never read the Report itself—there are too many details for a layman like myself ever really to be able to analyze. But I feel that it is of vital importance that we should get to the bottom of what took place there, because it may mean so much for the future of this country.

John Rechy
novelist (City of Night)

Because the horror of an unsolved murder is so enormous, I hope the intelligent questioning continues until—hopefully—the truth emerges.

Godfrey Cambridge
comedian

The Warren Commission issued their report and people booed, right? Well, that's what people do. When something happens, from housemaid's knee to the stock market falling, people blame it on the Right—and people blame it on the Left.

Maybe in the year 2053 there'll be an obscure little professor with horn-rimmed glasses at the University of Minnesota who'll find an obscure diary and it will say that President Johnson actually had a remote-control set-up, and that when he pushed a button in his car—*choo!*—that was it. President Johnson, Oswald, a Mexican peon, and a Negro bootblack. We have to get *all* races represented in there.

Theodore Kupferman
Representative (R., N. Y.)

My proposal is for a joint Congressional committee to see if we can get a Congressional investigation. There's been so much criticism of the findings of the Warren Commission by intelligent people—I don't mean Mark Lane, but Epstein and Dick Goodwin—that obviously the Commission did not complete the job. Ostensibly they were supposed to provide domestic tranquility, and they failed to do so. We want to see if the *most* has been done, and to track down the objections.

The credence of good people has been strained.

Sol Yurick
novelist (Fertig)

Upon hearing the news, Malcolm X said that the chickens had come home to roost: it was an outrageous remark, widely misinterpreted: even Malcolm probably didn't know what he really meant. Malcolm thought the assassination merely a product of the racist struggle: Whitey's business.

The true meaning of Malcolm's words was that the act was an apotheosis of an American process; a purely American event was what killed Kennedy... Malcolm's sense of gloomy satisfaction meant that the killing, in the long run, was a just one.

Why just? Isn't such a speculation a little mad? What we fail to see is that Kennedy was a *sacrificial* figure whose death should have served to bring understanding of America and its corruption: a purification. This fact, in the later interpretation, was corrupted. The martyr became a martyr in name only: in the hands of the New Criticism, Kennedy's death became meaningless; sentimental.

What we dare not understand is that America is a corrupted land; its noble ideals have been denied or warped since the inception of the nation. America is a violent land which has been settled and developed by violent people, doing violence to one another on *all* levels. It is the veneer of pragmatic reasonableness, of consensus, that has disguised this fact because we have buried not only our victims, but the history of how we killed our victims. After all, we have gloated, this is no Germany, no Russia, no China; we have due process. But the seminal legend of frontier justice, the gun-hero cutting through red tape to redress grievances, pervades our culture. So every now and then, the whole implicit seethe of violence beneath the surface of our country comes to a head; some spectacular act is committed which is more in the nature of a national rite rather than a newspaper headline.

Now Kennedy was a good man, good by the pluralistic standards of America: he was for civil rights, for an understanding with the iron-curtain countries, against poverty...he had all the right feelings. Yet he was the leader of the land and the very spirit of a hero-sacrifice consists of having the good man die for us, taking on our sins. And, according to legend, then there comes a Paul, or a Pauline council, to misinterpret the nature of the sacrifice in the interests of harmony. As has happened.

And the assassin? Only a kind of symbolic manifestation of the American process; an unwitting personification; a man drafted, so to speak, to be an executioner; a figure to fill all of our absurd, speculative projections.

Who then killed Kennedy? Not so much the political ultras, or the ultras of our dreams, but all of us who, in doing nothing, have given assent to the way things are...we were the assassin.